

# KANSAS COMMISSION ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS



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### Commission Notes

The next KCVA Commission Meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 16, 2013, at 10:00 AM in the Senate Room at the Jayhawk Tower, Topeka, KS.

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### Quilt Donation to Kansas Veterans' Home Resident

Students in Cherryvale High School's *Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America* (FCCLA) group wanted this year's service project to benefit a veteran. FCCLA advisor Marla Sterling contacted KCVA about the quilt they were finishing. In early March the quilt arrived and was accepted by Navy veteran and Kansas Veterans' Home resident Deborah Musgrave.





## Kansas Veterans' Cemeteries Receive Excellence of Appearance Awards



Left to Right: Joshua de Leon, Heidi Goff, Cemetery Manager (Fort Dodge/WaKeeney), James Dill, Cemetery Manager (Winfield), Joe Gilbert, Cemetery Manager (Winfield) (Retired), D. Keith Shurtleff, Cemetery Manager (Fort Riley), and Kafer Peele, Cemetery Program Director

The state of Kansas' four veterans' cemeteries in Fort Dodge, Fort Riley, WaKeeney, and Winfield received Excellence of Appearance Awards from the VA, Veterans Cemetery Grants Service (VCGS) and National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

"This is a great honor. The state of Kansas has four great veterans' cemeteries that provide excellent options for veterans and their eligible dependents," stated Gregg Burden, Executive Director of the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs (KCVA).

In 1999, K.S.A. 73-1232 authorized the KCVA to establish and maintain a state system of four regional veterans' cemeteries. The original Kansas Soldiers' Home Cemetery, established in 1890, was to be expanded, with construction costs covered by an approved construction grant from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. This bill also authorized the establishment of three additional veterans' cemeteries with construction funded by approved construction grants from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The state received \$19.3 million dollars from the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Cemetery Grants Service and National Cemetery Administration, for the construction of the four State Veterans' Cemeteries. In 2002, the Kansas Veterans' Cemetery at Fort Dodge was dedicated and opened, and in 2004, the Kansas Veterans' Cemeteries at WaKeeney and Winfield were dedicated and opened. In 2009, the Kansas Veterans' Cemetery at Fort Riley was dedicated and opened.

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## **Kansas Veterans' Cemeteries Receive Excellence of Appearance Awards—Continued**

Once the state veterans' cemetery is opened, it is the state's responsibility to support and maintain the cemeteries to VA/NCA standards. The VA/NCA is required to review state veterans' cemetery operations at least once every three years.

Joshua de Leon said, "We are proud to be here today to present all four Kansas State Veterans' Cemeteries with the Excellence of Appearance Award. Although some of us may make distinctions between national, military, state, and tribal cemeteries, veterans do not. They expect the same high standards of appearance and service wherever they choose to be laid to rest. The National Cemetery Administration is proud to continue the strong partnership we share with the state of Kansas in serving veterans."

"Hopefully, this gives veterans and their dependents peace of mind knowing that their loved ones have been laid to rest at a place of dignity and honor, where the strive for excellence in all areas is the standard," KCVA Cemetery Program Director Kafer Peele stated.

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### **Winfield Cemetery Manager Joe Gilbert Retires**



Joe Gilbert (on left) with Cemetery Program Director Kafer Peele

On March 15, 2013, Joe Gilbert, Cemetery Manager for the Winfield Cemetery, retired after 23 years and 6 months of service with the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs. Mr. Gilbert was hired as the first Cemetery Manager for the Winfield Cemetery on September 12, 2004.

Over the past 8 years and 6 months, Mr. Gilbert did an outstanding job as Cemetery Manager. Under his leadership, the Cemetery has passed two Triennial Reviews conducted by the Veterans Cemetery Grants Service (VCGS), National Cemetery Administration (NCA), and in March, 2013, the Cemetery received the Excellence of Appearance Award from the VCGS, NCA.



## Colby Field Office

*Oasis on the Plains*, that is the self-proclaimed moniker that Colby and Thomas County, Kansas have used as their tagline for years. This is a very fitting description for the vibrant community located on Interstate-70, about halfway between Salina, Kansas and Denver, Colorado. The KCVA field office in Colby covers the 15 counties in extreme Northwest Kansas, and services about 4,300 veterans. Jody Tubbs is our resident Veteran Service Representative (VSR) expert, and has been employed with the Commission for 19 years. She takes pride in knowing that she is giving back to those who have given of themselves to protect what we so often take for granted, our freedom! Jody feels that she has learned as much from the veterans and family members that she assists as they have from her about benefits. During her time as a VSR, she has seen the transition from primarily WWII veterans needing assistance to the Korean and Vietnam War-era veteran, as well as the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans coming in for help more recently. She believes that many of the current generation are much more informed about benefits, and many times they are well into the claims process before they show up at the field office.

Jody is somewhat of a transplant, originally born and raised in Wichita, Kansas, until the age of twelve. She then moved to Leoti, Kansas, and has since set down roots in Colby. Jody is all about exercise. She gets up at 4 AM to walk five miles several times a week. "A good way to start each day; it's amazing what you will see and it's absolutely mood altering," says Jody. She enjoys spending time with her four children and six grandsons. She has also bowled in a league for 20 years. Jody has a celebrity racing family, as two of her sons have garnered the highest of accolades to include many race wins, track championships, and national recognition in the IMCA Stock Car division. In 2012, her son, Nick, was the Kansas State Champion and ranked third in the nation, and her son, Jeff, finished third in Kansas and ranked seventh in the country. Congratulations to the Tubbs family, and good luck on many more successful seasons of racing!



The Colby field office is located at 990 S. Range, Suite 3, so please stop by and say hello to Jody if you are in the area or are in need of benefits.



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